

# Sparks

Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

2021

“How can one speak of the present, when one feels abandoned by it?”

—Lara Mimosa Montes, *Thresholds* (Coffee House Press 2020)

“Grief is not always sharp, but grief is always.”

—Mairead Case, *Tiny* (Featherproof Books 2020)

“How did we get entrenched in this insidious wage labor relationship—where we’re servants to that really repulsive phrase, ‘making a living’? I hate that phrase. We have a living—we have lives. How dare that wage labor relationship—how dare work—overlay itself onto life—and even pretend that it is life?”

—Conner Habib, in conversation with Kathi Weeks, on *Against Everyone* with Conner Habib, September 9, 2020

“After all, the point of art is to show people that life is worth living by showing that it isn’t.”

—Fanny Howe, “Bewilderment,” *HOW2*, edited by Kathleen Fraser, 1999

“Literature is a seat, the one left behind when you are rounded up and interned.”

—Jourdan Imani Keith, in *Seismic: Seattle, City of Literature*, edited by Kristen Millares Young, 2020

“States are nothing if not mass manufacturers of amnesia.”

—Roberto Lovato on *Democracy Now*, September 9, 2020

“More of us need to invest in the imaginative, because if you can invest in the imaginative you can invest in abolition.”

—George Johnson, on the “Black Joy” panel at *Lambdalit Fest*, October 5, 2020

“One of the difficulties we have now as writers, as creative thinkers, is that political discourse is satirizing itself, that we almost don’t have room to parody and ridicule the public discourse because it has become so inherently ridiculous.”

—Harryette Mullen, in conversation with Dionne Brand, *Center for African American Poetry & Poetics* at University of Pittsburgh, September 28, 2020

“I hope that I am producing things that are defying even my wishes.”

—Brandon Shimoda on *Between the Covers* with David Naimon, August 15, 2019

“Anything’s impossible.”

—Graham Foust, *Necessary Stranger* (Flood Editions 2007)

“People want to understand, and because of that some of them have a hard time not killing everything.”

—Mairead Case, *Tiny* (Featherproof Books 2020)

“The word ‘heart’ means nothing to the heart.”

—Dionne Brand, in conversation with Harryette Mullen, *Center for African American Poetry & Poetics* at University of Pittsburgh, September 28, 2020

“To have a conversation, you have to show up.”

—Claudia Rankine, speaking at *BookPeople* about *Just Us*, September 17, 2020

“It’s not Black lives in the future, it’s Black lives now.”

—Sadé Smith, on the Morning Update Show, Converge Media, August 4, 2020  
(Curated by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore)

Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore is the author of three novels and two nonfiction titles, and the editor of five non-fiction anthologies. Her latest title, *The Freezer Door*, is out now from Semiotext(e). For virtual book tour events and other mayhem, visit [mattildabernsteinsycamore.com](http://mattildabernsteinsycamore.com)

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